

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Post Oak Springs Christian Church  
other names/site number NA

## 2. Location

street & number Roane State Hwy. (Old Kingston Hwy.) at Post Oak Road N/A  not for publication  
city or town Post Oak N/A  vicinity  
stat Tennessee code TN county Roane code 145 zip code 37854  
e \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

1

sites

structures

2

objects

Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Church

EDUCATION/school

~~Commercial ?~~

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Work in Progress

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: gable front church with Gothic Revival

influence

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK; concrete block

walls weatherboard

roof Metal; asphalt shingle

other slag glass

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion  
Settlement  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1876-1956  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1876, 1924, 1955  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Multiple; unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

# \_\_\_\_\_

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: East Tennessee History Center, McClung Collection

Post Oak Springs Christian Church  
Name of Property

Roane County, Tennessee  
County and State

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 1 acre Rockwood 123 SW

**UTM References**

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u> Zone	<u>713624</u> Easting	<u>3972327</u> Northing	3	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Andra Kowalczyk  
organization East Tennessee Development District date September 1, 2006  
street & number P.O. Box 249 telephone (865) 273-6003  
city or town Alcoa state TN zip code 37701-0249

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**Additional Documentation**

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submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 Or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO) or FPO for any additional items

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**Property Owner**

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(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name See continuation sheet  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Post Oak Christian Church  
Roane County, Tennessee

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## Owners

Post Oak Springs Christian Church (owner)  
C/o Pastor  
4761 Roane State Hwy  
Rockwood, Tennessee 37854  
(865) 354-2769

Judy Wassom (contact person)  
Rockwood 2000  
Post Office Box 833  
Rockwood, Tennessee 37854  
(865) 776-0510

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Post Oak Christian Church  
Roane County, Tennessee

## VII Physical Description

The Post Oak Springs Christian Church is located in the unincorporated community of Post Oak, an early nineteenth-century settlement of Roane County, Tennessee, situated east of the Cumberland Plateau and west of the Tennessee River. Completed in 1876, this frame Victorian era church has minimal Gothic Revival detailing. The building is the third permanent structure to house the Post Oak Springs Christian Church congregation since its establishment in 1812. It is located on the Old Kingston Highway, which connects Rockwood, to the west, and Kingston, to the east. Post Oak Springs Christian Church had additions in 1955 and in the 1970s, yet it retains its overall integrity.

The front entrance of the church is on the southeast façade, which measures approximately thirty feet across. Three low, concrete steps rise to the paneled, double-door entrance, which is topped with a large slag glass transom with a pattern of two rows of eight panes. A pedimented lintel is above the transom. The height of the church reaches over two stories. Over the entrance, the medium-pitched, gable roof features a steeple with wood shingle detailing, a yoke collar, and slightly flared cupola. The collar and cupola are covered with metal in a shingle pattern design. The roof is now covered in asphalt shingle, though it originally matched the cupola. The steeple contains the church's original bell, which still operates.

The southwest and northeast elevations of the 1876 building are basically identical, each featuring three three-by-eight foot, two-over-two, double-hung, slag glass windows. Each of these framed windows is topped with a row of four-pane slag glass and a pedimented lintel, for a total dimension of four-by-ten foot from sill to peak. The entire exterior of the church is white weatherboards, and the foundation is brick. The southwest elevation has a small lean-to covering the entrance to the basement, which houses a circa 1924 Lennox brand furnace. The church's sturdy sub-flooring can be viewed from the basement, evident in the heavy chestnut cross beams and flooring. The underside surface of the church's floor has unusual detailing resembling a board-and-batten treatment typically seen on outbuilding walls.

At the back of the 1876 church, at the northeast corner, is a door to access a 1955 Fellowship Hall annex that creates an ell of the church's entire configuration. In 1955, new leadership in the church revived membership and successfully funded a rear annex to house a kitchen, restroom, and Bible study classrooms. This addition conceals the original northwest elevation of the 1876 exterior and continues to extend outward from the church to form an ell. The gable roof of the one-story annex is perpendicular to that of the two-story, 1876 church; the 1955 annex's roof features a small cross gable that aligns with the rear gable of the 1876 church. The annex's foundation is concrete block, and the siding on this 1955 section is weatherboard to match that on the 1876 church. The annex is approximately forty-five-by-fifteen feet and today contains three rooms, a bathroom, and a kitchen. Each room and the kitchen contain a six-over-six window on the northwest exterior.

With the construction of the 1955 annex, the southwest elevation's full length (church plus annex) was approximately sixty-five feet. During the 1970s, a twenty-four-by-fifteen feet recreation room was added off the kitchen portion of the 1955 annex, making a "T" of the church's overall configuration. This circa 1970 exterior is covered in wide wood board. While its roof is parallel with that of the 1955 annex, it is of a lower

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Post Oak Christian Church  
Roane County, Tennessee

pitch. A paneled-door entrance was inserted into the crook of the "T" for access from the southwest exterior of the church. A small four-over-four window is next to this landing, and a larger six-over-six window appears at the far end of this addition. Two six-over-six windows appear on the rear, or northwest, side of this addition.

Soon after this, a second recreation room was added, extending the southwest arm of the "T." This room measures twenty-by-twenty feet and also has its own access, though all rooms are accessible to each other inside. The exterior door to this second recreation room is paneled and has small glass panes. It also has two six-over-six windows on the front and back sides each. The exterior is surfaced with wide wood board. These 1970s additions will be removed in the renovation and repair of the church for use as a wedding chapel or special event venue.

The formal entrance on the southeast façade opens into a six-foot deep narthex; this interior wall contains two doors, off-set from center, that open into the nave, or main body, of the church. These interior doors are of dark, paneled wood. Original hardware for all doors is either still installed or safe in storage (available for reinstallation). The original pulpit and some of the original pews are stored in the narthex at this time. The nave of the church is currently open, with the remaining original pews temporarily moved aside. Oral history maintains that member William J. Owings cut the pews from one large poplar tree. A photo from 1976 shows the proper arrangement of the pews, which vary in length.



At the altar end of the church's nave is a foot-high riser approximately measuring twelve-by-nine feet. This space once held the pipe organ donated from the Rockwood Church in 1920. The organ currently resides at the congregation's new church across the road. To the east of the riser, a door leads to the 1955 addition.

Interior frames on the doors and windows feature pedimented lintels matching those on the exterior. A four-foot high wainscoting in dark, vertical wood slats runs the perimeter of the room. Work has begun to remove remodeling from the 1970s: a thin layer of carpet over three-quarter inch particle board covers original hardwood floor; panel board sections were hung above the wainscoting and extend to the ceiling. This treatment is being removed to reveal a layer of blue-green wallpaper over plaster on lath board. Fluorescent light fixtures hang below the dropped ceiling. Above the front riser, a single cutout exists for a light fixture suspended above the dropped ceiling. It is planned to investigate above the dropped ceiling, to ascertain the original ceiling of the church.

The door at the back of the church leads to the hall of the 1955 addition. To the northeast is the doorway to the exterior. To the northwest, along the original 1876 exterior wall, there is storage and a bathroom. Across the hall, the first room at the northeast end of the "T," is approximately nine feet wide and fifteen feet long. Two more rooms and a kitchen, each approximately twelve-by-ten feet, are located along the new northwest

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Post Oak Christian Church  
Roane County, Tennessee

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elevation. These rooms were used for Bible classes and fellowship meetings. They are currently being used for storage. The northwest end of the hall opens into a large, circa 1970 recreation room, approximately twenty-four-by-fifteen feet. This, and the next twenty-by-twenty room, was added in the 1970s; church leaders have discussed removing this non-historic addition.

Also on the property is a pump house. Outside the kitchen portion of the 1955 annex is a six-by-six foot pump house, sheltering the church's well pump. Its exterior is covered in wide wood board. Its exact date of construction is unknown, though logic would date the need for kitchen and bathroom water to the 1955 annex. Church members have dated it at least to that time. However, siding on the pump house matches that of the 1970s addition, so it was probably resurfaced at the time of the 1970s addition. It is a contributing structure.



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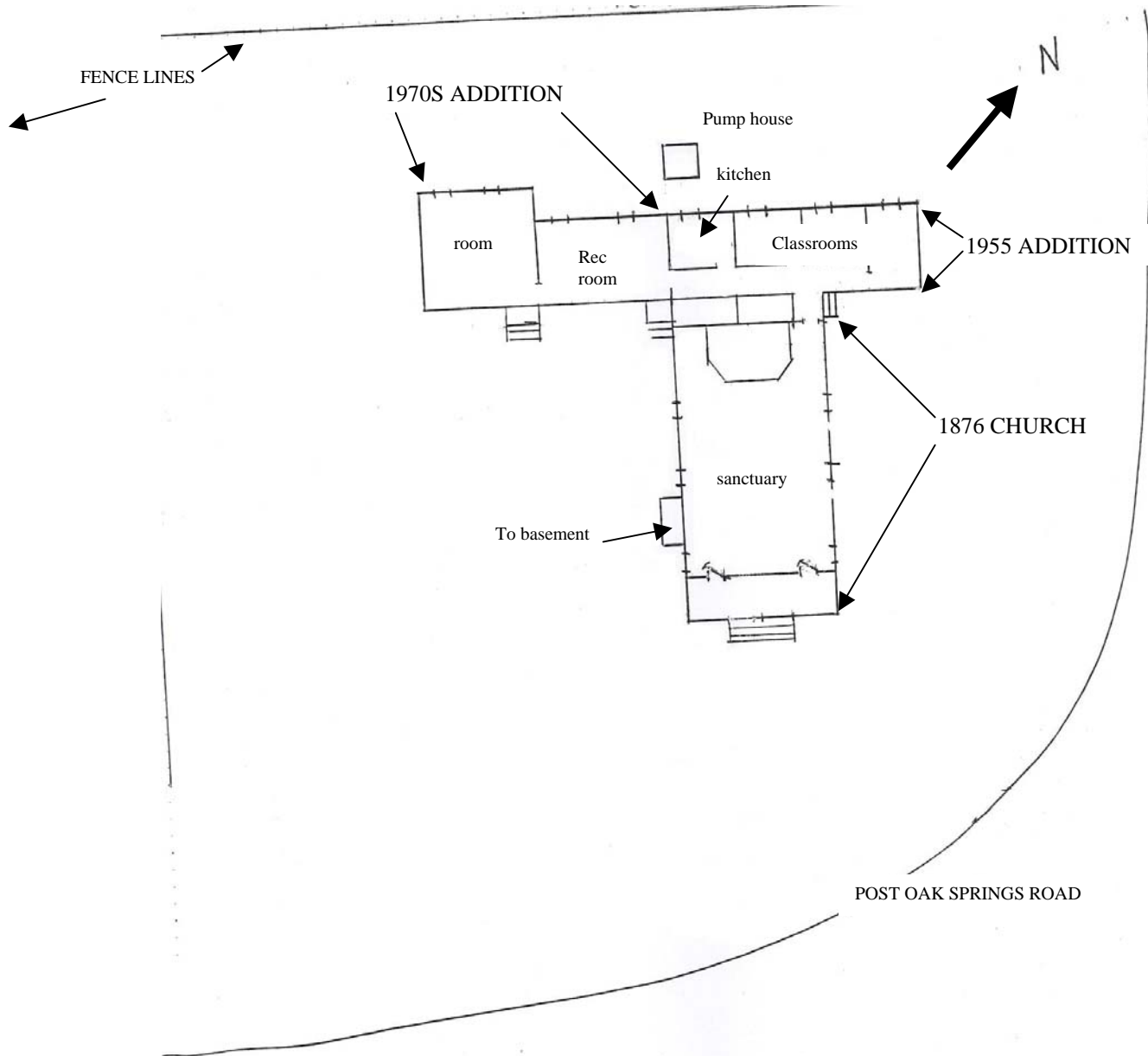
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Post Oak Christian Church  
Roane County, Tennessee

Sketch plan

Not to scale



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Roane County, Tennessee**VIII Statement of Significance**

The historic 1876 Post Oak Springs Christian Church is being nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A in the areas of religion and settlement. As the third permanent church, the building represents the late nineteenth century settlement patterns and religious development in this rural part of the county and region. Evangelists and ministers went from Post Oak Springs Christian Church preaching the gospel of the Christian Church, thereby helping to settle the area. Although the first Post Oak Springs church was established in 1812, it is the period from 1876 on that is represented by the subject property. As membership of Post Oak Spring Christian Church dwindled, the congregation continued to minister to and establish daughter churches. These newer congregations continued to look upon the Post Oak Springs Christian Church as the mother church throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> Despite architectural additions, made in an effort to help bolster membership, the Post Oak Springs Christian Church retains its integrity as a rural, minimally Gothic-influenced church of simple, quality design, evident in its original bell-flared cupola atop a shingle-work steeple, slag glass windows, chestnut beam floor joists, unadorned wood pulpit, and hand-hewn wood pews.

Local historians such as Truman D. Anderson, John T. Staples, and Elsie Staples Burkett have recognized the Post Oak Springs Christian Church as Roane County's earliest church as well as the first surviving church in Tennessee dedicated to the non-denominational Christian movement spawned from the historic Cane Ridge Revival in Kentucky in 1801.<sup>2</sup> This fervent gathering, attended by of thousands of worshippers, brought together Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists from Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee. Subsequently, in 1803 at Cane Ridge, minister Barton Warren Stone withdrew from his Presbyterian post and led an ecumenical movement that sought to create a faith based on elementary Christian beliefs.<sup>3</sup> The essence of the religion rejects denominational division, recognizes Christ as the only head of the Church, and uses the Bible as a sole guide to pursue faith. Value of education and a sense of democratic independence fostered refinement in the frontier religion. Thus, some scholars have described the movement as an indigenous American faith. This Christian Church movement flowed out of Cane Ridge as migrants settled the Tennessee frontier. The history of Roane County's Post Oak Springs Christian Church is closely associated with the rise of the Christian movement in Tennessee.

<sup>1</sup> Josephine Murphey, "Mother Church," *Nashville Tennessean Magazine*, October 1947, n.p. Though a Christian congregation arose in Bradley County circa 1810, its members dispersed.

<sup>2</sup> Truman D. Anderson, ed., in *A Guidebook to Historic Places in Roane County, Tennessee* (Kingston, TN: Roane County Heritage Commission, 1997), 20, 22; Elsie Staples Burkett, "History of the Christian Church at Post Oak Springs, Tennessee" in Sesquicentennial Anniversary: Post Oak Springs Christian Church program, 1962. (The group that officially established Bethel Presbyterian Church in Kingston in 1818 may have held meetings concurrent with those of the Post Oak Christian Church: "Bethel Organized in 1818 by Six Men and 20 Women," *Today's News, Harriman*, 25 October 1974, 3. Another early nineteenth-century Christian movement led by Thomas Campbell was known by the name Disciples of Christ. Additionally, a third Christian group, the Church of Christ, broke away from the Christian Church in 1906 based on objection to the use of musical instruments in services. Thus, while there is a shared theological past among the three groups, each could historically claim a different origin.)

<sup>3</sup> "Cane Ridge Meeting House," available at website <http://www.caneridge.org/> accessed June 7, 2006.

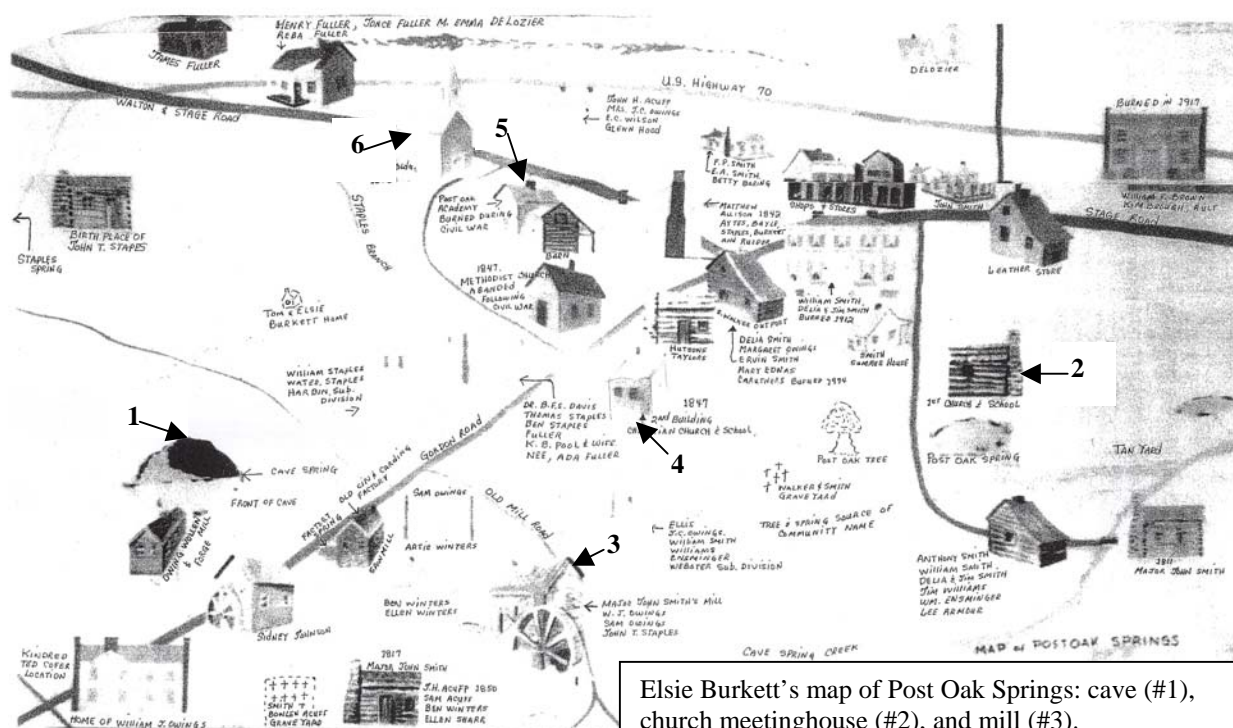
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Post Oak Springs Christian Church  
Roane County, Tennessee

After a decade of military presence at Fort Southwest Point (NR 7/31/72), Roane County was officially founded in 1801. Major John Smith and family, from Virginia, came to the area around the time of the fort's establishment. Smith was stationed for some time at the area that became Bradley County but is known to have bought land in 1811 at Post Oak Springs, Roane County, near "the big cave." In this vicinity, Smith helped establish the Post Oak Springs Christian Church in 1812 with Hawkins Countian Isaac Rice.<sup>4</sup> It was the first religious congregation to organize in Roane County. Rice built a log structure in 1812 for religious gathering. Referred to in Roane County records as Rice's meetinghouse, it was burned between 1814 and 1817. It is thought that nonbelievers, who considered the Christian Church movement "strange and even dangerous," burned the structure. Isaac Rice moved away, and church meetings were thereafter held at the mill of Major John Smith, according to Smith family oral history.<sup>5</sup>



Elsie Burkett's map of Post Oak Springs: cave (#1), church meetinghouse (#2), and mill (#3).

During this settlement period, Roane County was a transportation hub by both river and road. In addition to having a key water transportation route, the area had two east-west roads: the Walton Road, built by Captain William Walton in 1801, connected Kingston with Nashville; another early nineteenth century road built by George Gordon connected Post Oak with Nashville. Thus, from the period of its establishment, the Post Oak Springs Christian Church was easily visited by "evangelists and ministers" who "traveled on horseback," as

<sup>4</sup> Burkett, Church program; "Roane County, Tennessee - Biographies - Goodspeed Biographical Sketches," accessed June 9, 2006, at website <http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/tn/roane/bios/goodbios.txt>.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, 20; Murphey, n.p.; Eugene Monroe Pickel, *A History of Roane County, Tennessee to 1860* (Kingston, TN: Roane County Heritage Commission, 1981), 51-2; Gladys Stinnett Maher and Sheridan Charles Randolph, *William Randolph of Post Oak Springs: a Family History* (s.l.: Merton Co., 2004), 355.

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Roane County, Tennessee

the Christian movement continued to follow frontier migration into Tennessee. (The term “circuit rider” appears to be exclusive to Methodism, though the system of religious dissemination was comparable.)<sup>6</sup>

More than a dozen traveling evangelists visited Post Oak Springs Christian Church, bringing new leaders to the church. Around 1833, Isaac Mulkey came to Post Oak after Major John Smith passed away, and the congregation discontinued regular meetings. Mulkey oversaw the reinstatement of regular Sunday services, spurring a growth in membership. At the time, services were held in a log building until a frame structure was built in the 1840s. (Burkett map #4.) Trustees of the new church building included William J. Owings and John Acuff; both served as preachers from 1850 until the Civil War.<sup>7</sup>

True to its core social beliefs, the Post Oak Springs Christian Church influenced more than religion, supporting education and business enterprises. In 1824 the community contracted with Moses Millican to teach reading, writing, spelling, and math. By 1850, the Post Oak Academy was established. (Burkett map #5.) Professor Richard Pierce Bayly had come to Tennessee in the 1840s and married Elmyra Staples, of a prominent Post Oak Church family, in 1850, the same year he established the Post Oak Academy. During the Civil War, the academy, which had served a large area, ceased educational operations and came to be used as a courier post for the Union Army before it was burned. Post Oak Springs Christian Church services were also discontinued during the war years due to conflicting loyalties among members.

However, following the Civil War, such divisive feelings were mollified when leading church member John Acuff is said to have arranged a service with his two sons, one a Union veteran, the other, Confederate, seated together. Thus began a period of growth for the church that included expansion of the Christian movement and the building of a third structure, the subject of this nomination. (Burkett map #6.) Since that time the history of the church can be seen through the growth of the Christian movement beyond the Post Oak vicinity and through the history of the area’s prominent families, such as Owings, Acuff, Hinds, Staples, and Smith.<sup>8</sup>

Roane County experienced marked growth during the late 1860s. With the establishment of the Roane Iron Company, the company town of Rockwood was born in 1868 four miles west of Post Oak Springs. The Post Oak congregation expanded its influence to the developing city. John Acuff preached the non-denominational Christian religion throughout the summer of 1868 at a Rockwood sawmill until a frame church was built to house meetings.<sup>9</sup> The Post Oak Academy was also revived that same year under its original founder, Professor Bayly. (As the Academy building had been burned, it is likely that classes were held in the 1840s Post Oak Springs Christian church, as oral history maintains that the building was both a

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, 4; John C. Keener, *Post Oak Circuit* (s.l.: E. Stevenson & F.A. Owen, 1857), n.p.; Maher and Randolph, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Maher and Randolph, 8, 355; Pickel, 52.

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, 20; Burkett, Church Program; Elsie Staples Burkett, ed., “Education,” “Historical Background,” “Families,” and “Churches” in *Historical Review: Rockwood’s Centennial Year, 1868-1968*, (Kingston, TN: Centennial Committee, 1968), n.p.; Maher and Randolph, 355; Pickel 52; Emma Middleton Wells, “Part Three: Post Oak Springs,” in *The History of Roane County, Tennessee, 1801-1870* (Chattanooga, TN: Lookout Publishing Company, 1927), accessed June 9, 2006 at website <http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/tn/roane/history/1927/roanecou/postoaks34nms.txt>.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson 20, 37-8; Burkett, ed., “Churches” n.p.

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Post Oak Springs Christian Church  
Roane County, Tennessee

church and a school.) Students enrolled that year included members from the Staples, Owings, and Acuff families.<sup>10</sup>

In a climate of rejuvenation, the Post Oak Springs Christian Church congregation began work in the 1870s on a third official structure, completed in 1876. Major John Smith's family continued its influence, as his grandsons James, Anthony, Franklin Pierce, and Robert preached there. The new church's first trustees included William Smith (Anthony Smith's son), James C. Hinds, and Samuel J. Acuff.<sup>11</sup> Some young men of these founding families spent time away from their Roane County homes to travel, experience new environs, gain skills in new trades, and spread the ecumenical philosophy of the Christian movement. The 1870 census records for Rockwood and vicinity reveal that Post Oak church members James Hinds, Samuel Acuff, William J. Owings, and William Smith, having spent a few years out of state, each returned home to farm.<sup>12</sup> Thus the Post Oak congregation, as exemplified by these representative families, collectively reflects the independence and entrepreneurialism of their faith. Their return to Post Oak after traveling, their reclaiming of their agricultural roots, and their building of the third church structure in the 1870s represented a commitment of these traveled, multi-skilled men to upholding their Christian faith in a simple, rural environment. The 1870s resurgence of the Post Oak Springs Christian Church congregation perpetuated its dominant role in serving as the seat of the Christian movement in Tennessee. The Church's system of traveling ministers, documented as early as 1838, continued in this revival period to expand the mission by helping establish and fostering new Christian churches.<sup>13</sup>

Traveling evangelists J.H. Denton and B.F. Clay, from Kentucky, arrived to Post Oak in 1874 and 1882, respectively, to help expand the Christian movement through preaching, revivals, and encouraging new congregations. Before the war, the Post Oak Springs Christian Church congregation was small, yet the revitalization that took place after the war helped the church to grow considerably in membership. As the Post Oak Springs Christian Church grew, Clay and Denton expanded their ministering territory west from Post Oak to Rockwood, encouraging the building of a permanent church there. The Rockwood First Christian Church was completed in 1885, and Denton served as its minister until 1887. The Rockwood Church, as the town itself, continued to grow as a result of the establishment of the Roane Iron Company, which donated a lot for the building of the church's parsonage in 1895.<sup>14</sup>

This outgrowth of the Christian movement from Post Oak next expanded to points eastward, namely Knoxville and Harriman. J. H. Denton, having successfully helped to bolster the congregations at Post Oak and Rockwood, began spreading the Christian faith through Sunday services at Knoxville and Harriman. Taking advantage of the East Tennessee Land Company's offer of free lots to churches, the Harriman Christian Church in 1891 built the first permanent church building in the town. As another daughter church

<sup>10</sup> Burkett, ed., "Education," n.p.

<sup>11</sup> Burkett, Church Program, 1962.

<sup>12</sup> Burkett, ed., "Historical Background" and "The Inhabitants of Rockwood and vicinity in 1870 Census" in *Historical Review: Rockwood's Centennial Year, 1868-1968*, n.p.; "ROANE COUNTY, TN - BIOGRAPHIES - Goodspeed Biographical Sketches" available at website <http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/tn/roane/bios/goodbios.txt> accessed June 9, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Wells, at website <http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/tn/roane/history/1927/roanecou/postoaks34nms.txt>.

<sup>14</sup> Burkett, ed., "Churches," n.p.; Burkett, Church Program.

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of the original Post Oak Springs Christian Church, the Harriman Christian Church membership flourished, growing from fourteen original members to eighty-five by 1896. (The Harriman Church, itself, became a leader in spreading the Christian movement, as its minister from 1920 to 1942, Dr. R. M. Bell, later became president of Johnson Bible College, a Christian-based school near Knoxville.)

Thus, the influence of the Post Oak Springs Christian Church was generational, so to speak, as daughter churches engendered further growth of the Christian movement. Still, Post Oak continued to have direct impact. In 1899, at Glen Alice, Tennessee, Franklin Pierce Smith, grandson of Major John Smith, built a Christian church. Franklin and others from Post Oak were charter members of the Glen Alice church. They also helped establish the Pond Grove Christian Church. Franklin and his brother John Smith III "were preachers and carpenters, building Christian church congregations as well as meeting houses" as part of the mission to help expand the religious movement. As the mother church, the Post Oak Christian Church fostered the spread the religion across East Tennessee.<sup>15</sup>

At this point, the Post Oak Springs Christian Church continued to thrive and in 1893 witnessed "the largest crowd . . . in attendance that ever was known at the cave," as "candidates were baptized by Bro. J.O Stewart that had confessed Christ." (Originally the cave on Major John Smith's early property, the site served as a place for baptism, though it is unclear how frequently such rites took place.) In that year, church records documented an active congregation at Post Oak Springs Christian Church: weekly worship, weekly supper meetings, and an election of officers on December 31. Church leaders maintained influence over social matters, deliberating over the misbehavior of wayward Christians and promoting education through lectures. For example, officers of the church met on May 13, 1894 to address the charges of "drinking and ludeness [sic]" among a few members. By June 3, at the weekly worship service, "it was announced that the church withdraw fellowship" from one of the offenders "for failing to make a proper acknowledgment of the charges preferred againsed [sic] him." Supper followed as usual. That year, "the church met in convention on [Thursday] August 31 and continued until Sunday." During this convention, "the subject of education was ably [sic] discussed by bro. Showatter of Milligan College." Speeches and essays were read including reports from nascent Christian churches and an essay whose subject was "what Christianity has done for women."<sup>16</sup>

This period appears to have been the peak of activity for the Post Oak Springs Christian Church congregation, both within its own congregation and in its influence elsewhere. As the city of Rockwood grew and offered increased business opportunities, the next generation of Acuff, Hinds, and Owings men gravitated there, becoming prominent merchants and/or connected with the Roane Iron Company.<sup>17</sup> Although Post Oak was very influential, the expansion of daughter churches had the effect of drawing away members from the mother church, as church records leading into the turn of the twentieth century show.

<sup>15</sup> Anderson, 60; Burkett, ed., "Families," n.p.; Walter T. Pulliam, *Harriman: The Town That Temperance Built* (Maryville, TN: Brazos Press, 1978), 603, 605, 606; Claude Scott Richmond, ed., *Christ in the Smokies: A History of the Christian Churches, Churches of Christ, and Related Organizations in the Smoky Mountain Area* (Seymour, TN: Harry L. Hamilton, 1976), 61, 89.

<sup>16</sup> "Christian Church, Post Oak Springs: 1893-1911," on Microfilm, 147-172, available at East Tennessee History Center, McClung Collection.

<sup>17</sup> Burkett, ed., "Historical Background," n.p.

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Entries in the Post Oak church's logbook were sporadic by 1896; by the early 1900s, only annual officers' meetings were entered into record. Circumstances appear to have become dire by 1909. In an officers' meeting on March 14 of that year, it was decided that "an examination of the Church Record was [to be] made to ascertain how the membership stood," with motions being made to write or talk to members who had been absent from regular church attendance. Even in this state of concern for membership, however, the officers held fast to their rules of conduct in excluding a member for "becoming a mother illegally." Another member's name was removed when that person joined the Methodist church; another was reported to have "gone to the Mormons." These were isolated incidents, however; by far, the two most common reasons for the congregation's attrition were death and joining a daughter church of the Christian faith. Of the roughly 360 members listed during the years from 1893 to 1911, more than thirty-eight percent left the Post Oak congregation.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, the Christian movement as a whole expanded, for the momentum sparked by the original Post Oak congregation spread to daughter churches. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Rockwood First Christian Church, recipient of many of the former Post Oak members, had grown to become the strongest and most vibrant of Post Oak's daughter churches. Dr. Wilmer Shamhart, Rockwood's resident minister from 1903 to 1910, also preached at Post Oak and Glen Alice, as well as leading summer revivals at Westel and Antioch that included baptisms and dinners. Thus, while the mother church was still included in area activities, it was the Rockwood church that flourished. There, Sunday school classrooms were added in 1910, and in 1915, the church installed a pipe organ.<sup>19</sup>

In 1920, the Rockwood First Christian Church donated a pipe organ to Post Oak, which it retains to this day. In 1924, a "Roane County Convention" of Christian Churches was held September 5-7 at Post Oak Springs Christian Church. The *Tennessee Christian* reported, "It was something of a homecoming," as Christians from Post Oak, Rockwood, Harriman, and Glen Alice flocked to "the oldest church of [their] people in the state."<sup>20</sup> The Rockwood church's resident minister at that time, Leland Cook, gave the sermon, and everyone paid homage to the mother church. Reports state that the Rockwood congregation by that time had grown to more than 600 members. The Harriman Christian congregation had also become a large congregation, and that of Glen Alice, located southwest of Rockwood, was not as large, but very active. A collection was taken to provide the mother church with a furnace. The atmosphere of the gathering invoked feelings of respect and piety towards the original church among the crowd in attendance, which included Smith and Staples family members. A bronze plaque was erected in the Post Oak churchyard in 1925 that notes the founding date and members of the influential congregation. By 1927, a historical report on Post Oak described the once thriving center of influence as a small village of four or five houses and one church. By 1947, when a student from Johnson Bible College in Knoxville visited, the Post Oak Springs Christian Church congregation numbered under 50 and had services only monthly.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "Christian Church, Post Oak Springs: 1893-1911," on Microfilm.

<sup>19</sup> Burkett, ed., "Churches," and "Families," n.p.

<sup>20</sup> Burkett, ed., "Churches," n.p.

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, 20; Burkett, ed., "Churches," n.p.; Murphey, n.p.; Wells, accessed June 9, 2006 at website <http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/tn/roane/history/1927/roanecou/postoaks34nms.txt>.

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The modern revival of the Post Oak Springs Christian Church came in the 1950s, with the ministry of Thomas A. Burkett. Pastor Burkett was no stranger to the Post Oak community, as his wife Elsie was the daughter of John Staples, church historian since 1910. Elsie's mother was born Mamie Ellen Smith, daughter of Franklin Pierce Smith, who was an active church member until his death in 1932. Mamie Ellen Smith Staples became the first woman Sunday School Superintendent of the church, as well as respected teacher.<sup>22</sup>

By the time of Pastor Burkett's leadership, 1951-1966, the church had "been handicapped for many years by the lack of adequate space for Bible School Classes," which perhaps contributed to the leaving of members to the more modern and expanded Rockwood church.<sup>23</sup> Also, the Post Oak church had never had a resident minister. In earlier years, the church relied on traveling evangelists and local leaders to keep the Christian movement alive. As Post Oak spawned other congregations, those daughter churches helped to keep Post Oak Church active. Until the 1950s, Post Oak Springs Christian Church was being served by weekend ministers, a situation that kept the church going, but did not serve to foster a sense of community. Burkett, a resident of Post Oak, revived the church's sense of identity, rallying the congregation to expand the facility to include a 1955 Bible School annex at the rear of the church. The Post Oak Springs Christian Church began sponsoring a Boy Scout Troop in 1953 and a Little League baseball team in the local league at Rockwood in 1956. The 1955 Fellowship Hall annex, which included class rooms, a kitchen, and rest rooms, represented an increase in property value of \$12,000; actual cash expenditures were \$4,000, as Post Oak members and other Christian church congregations from across the state donated time and materials. Membership at Post Oak increased by 100% between 1951 and 1955.<sup>24</sup>

Mr. and Mrs. John T. Staples had devoted their lives to service within the church, so it is fitting that their daughter would become the wife of its pastor as well as the keeper of church records following her father's death in 1960. Other women of the founding families were notable representatives of the Post Oak community, including Fidelia Smith, daughter of William Smith, and Margaret Owings. Both women were college educated and "did much to promote the growth of the church." Mrs. E. C. Wilson, nee Alice Owings, was a teacher whose husband helped to establish the Forest Avenue Christian Church in Knoxville in 1896. E. C. Wilson, a PhD, preached there from 1899-1901 and was a professor at Lynchburg College, a Christian Church school in Virginia. The couple retired to Post Oak, where Dr. Wilson also preached at the original Post Oak Springs Christian Church.<sup>25</sup>

The Staples family name also appears in the migration of Christian pioneers westward. Delila Staples was the first wife of Joel Dallas Hembree, whose own family had come to Roane County in 1806. They were part of the Post Oak community, and their children attended the Post Oak Academy. One branch of the Hembree family continued westward from Roane County shortly after arriving and is associated with leadership in the Christian church's expansion to the Midwest and later to the Pacific northwest. James and Nancy Hembree were living in McMinnville, Tennessee, when they decided to leave for Missouri, where they founded the

<sup>22</sup> Burkett, Church Program; Burkett, ed., "Families," n.p.

<sup>23</sup> Burkett, ed., "Churches," n.p.

<sup>24</sup> Burkett, ed., "Churches," n.p.

<sup>25</sup> Burkett, Church program; Burkett, ed., "Families," n.p.; Richmond, ed., 55, 57.



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first Christian Church of Dade County in 1839. Their adult son Absalom Jefferson Hembree, with his wife Nancy and their four children, soon followed; however, Absalom's family continued further, leaving Missouri for Oregon in 1843. Absalom's brother and sister-in-law, Joel Jordan and Sally Hembree also left McMinnville, Tennessee, for Oregon. In Yamhill County, Oregon, the Hembrees were among a group of Christian pioneers who established a new city they named McMinnville. In 1855, they founded the McMinnville Christian Church.<sup>26</sup>

The influence of the Christian movement originating from the mother church at Post Oak Springs continued into the twentieth century. The First Christian Church of Harriman, established by Post Oak members, sent five preachers out over the course of its history from 1890 to 1976 to spread the faith. The Harriman congregation also helped sponsor the establishment of two new churches: Morrison Hill Christian Church in Kingston (1965) and Fisk Heights Christian Church, also in Harriman (1972). Christian churches arose across the state, including at Etowah, Cleveland, Clinton, Morristown, Madisonville, McMinnville, Newport, Knoxville, Nashville, Chattanooga, Shelbyville, and many others in small towns.<sup>27</sup>

Tom Burkett, having ignited Post Oak Springs Christian Church's revival period in the 1950s, stepped down in 1966; minister duties went next to Bob Johnston (1966-1967), Jack Harrison (1967-1968), and Spencer Garner (1968-1976). In 1976, Post Oak Springs Christian Church hosted the Smoky Mountain Christian Men's Fellowship, the multi-congregation group organized in 1949 "first, to develop fellowship and understanding among men of the churches; second, to establish and assist new congregations of Christian Churches in this area which are free and independent of all organizations outside itself." That same year, minister Spencer Garner noted that Post Oak Springs Christian Church still maintained fine working relationships with the Harriman, Pond Grove, and Glen Alice Christian Churches, "all helped originally by members of the Post Oak Springs Church." Garner committed to building the Post Oak "congregation to the point where she can help start another new congregation and thus maintain her responsibility" to the Christian faith.<sup>28</sup> The Post Oak Springs Christian Church did indeed continue to increase in membership, outgrowing its historic building. The fourth permanent structure in the church's history was built across the road from the 1876 building that had served its congregation for more than 100 years. The current congregation hopes to restore the 1876 church for use as a special events or wedding chapel.

<sup>26</sup> Burkett, ed., "Families," n.p.; "Pioneer Church History: Yamhill County, Oregon," available at website [ncbible.org/nwh/orhistbb.html](http://ncbible.org/nwh/orhistbb.html) accessed June 19, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> "Bedford County, Tennessee," at <http://tngenweb.org/bedford/church.htm> accessed June 19, 2006; W. Bell, "A History of Vine Street Christian Church," in *Seven Early Churches of Nashville; a Series of Lectures Presented at The Public Library of Nashville and Davidson County* (Nashville: Elder's Bookstore, 1972); Richmond, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33 35, 37, 41, 43, 63, 72.

<sup>28</sup> Richmond, 89, 119.

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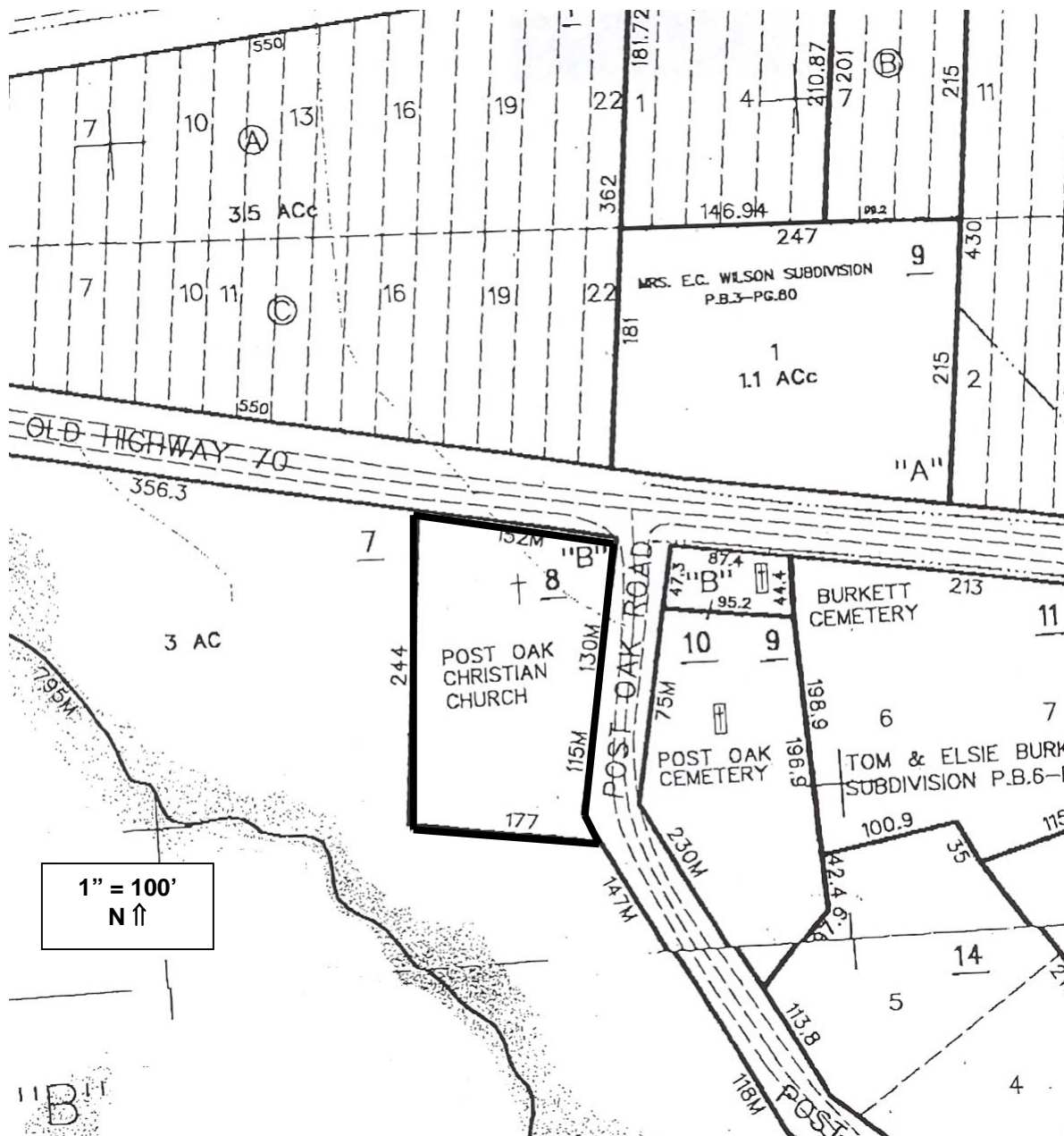
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Post Oak Springs Christian Church  
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## Verbal Boundary Description

The Post Oak Springs Christian Church is located within the community of Post Oak, Roane County, Tennessee. It sits on a corner lot, approximately 1 acre, at Old Highway 70 and Post Oak Springs Road, approximately four miles east of the city of Rockwood. Tax map 55E, Group B, Parcel 8.



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## Photographs

Post Oak Springs Christian Church  
Roane County, Post Oak, TN

Photos by: Andra Kowalczyk  
Date: July 7, 2006  
Negatives/digital images: Tennessee Historical Commission

### Exterior:

1. Facing northwest, photo of southeast façade, showing northeast elevation; view also shows 1955 addition to the northeast and 1970s addition to the northwest.
2. Steeple with metal shingle cupola.
3. Facing northwest, photo shows southeast entrance.
4. Facing southwest, photos shows northeast elevation of 1955 addition.
5. Facing southeast, photo shows northwest elevation. The 1955 addition ends where narrow weatherboard changes to wider board; pumphouse visible.
6. Pumphouse.
7. Facing northeast, photo shows southwest elevation of 1970s addition (possibly to be removed).
8. Facing northwest, photo shows southeast elevation of 1970s addition (possibly to be removed).
9. Facing northeast, photos shows, southwest elevation of church with lean-to cover to basement.

### Interior:

10. Front entrance, standing in narthex.
11. Two doors between narthex and nave. Original pews, stored at left.
12. Back of original church, doorway into 1955 addition.
13. Kitchen, from 1955
14. From kitchen, looking into 1970s addition.
15. From kitchen, looking into the 1955 addition.
16. Class room adjacent to kitchen, looking out window of northwest wall.
17. Southwest wall of 1876 church showing three windows.
18. Nave of 1876 church, facing front interior wall with two doors leading into narthex. (Can see one section of panel board is removed, revealing plaster and lath board beneath.)

